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Statement submitted by Foundation for Responsible Media, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

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Statement

The transformation of Media is a revolution that the world was ill-prepared for. Social media has put mainstream media and storytellers into a spin as the norms and practices of traditional media are continuously challenged. In the din, the "first voice", the citizen's voice, is still not heard enough. Grass root news remains submerged.

Meanwhile, citizens of all hues are incessantly using social media in an inane and ad hoc manner. This sometimes results in events like the Arab Spring. It can turn equally ugly when unsubstantiated information or hate speech turn viral, echo and lead to violent mob hysteria.

The sustainable development goals are clearly linked to the Millennium Development Goals vision, which means development in its totality, as well as democracy and freedom of expression. If so, can the world move ahead without media and information empowered citizens? Can the sustainable development goals be achieved without such empowered citizens? We believe the answer to both is "No".

Media and Information Literacy among citizens in democratic societies — evolving or otherwise — has become a primary need to bridge gaps and build platforms for replication of best practice. With Media and Information Literacy citizens can actively participate in processes related to their lives and dreams.

We, at FORMEDIA with a university network, MILUNI, have taken some steps for Media and Information Literacy under a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-led initiative of the Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information Literacy, which includes:

(a) A national consultation for a nation-wide group of development stakeholders.

(b) Training a group of scholars at Uttarakhand Open University in a marginalised and disaster-prone state.

(c) A training of trainers for development stakeholders and senior academics.

(d) The training of trainers manual translated into Hindi, one of India's official languages.

One concrete way of linking Media and Information Literacy to the sustainable development goals is including entry-level Media and Information Literacy activities for target groups as a mandatory integrated component in United Nationa projects, like monitoring and evaluation.

Media and Information Literacy offers the possibility of making the sustainable development goals attainable. One of the fundamental reasons we have not achieved the Millennium Development Goals is because policymakers and development experts do not recognise the essential role that information and communication play in development. Let us not make the same mistake again.